

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Sacramento
March 1961

Honorable Hugh M. Burns, President Pro Tem of the Senate
and
Honorable Ralph M. Brown, Speaker of the Assembly

Pursuant to Division 5, Part 1, Chapter 2, Article 1.3 Section 3211 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, the Coordinating Council on State Programs for the Blind herewith submits to the Legislature its ninth annual report covering the period from January 1, 1960 to December 31, 1960.

We believe the work of the Council has furthered the principle contained in the statute creating the Council; namely, provide for the coordination of the functions and programs of the various state departments insofar as such functions and programs affect the blind.

We trust this report will be of assistance to the Legislature.

Respectfully submitted,

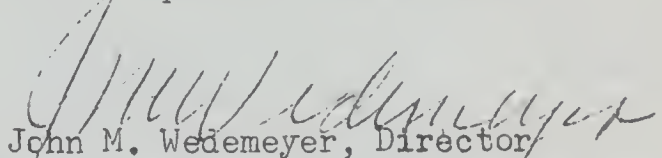
COORDINATING COUNCIL ON STATE PROGRAMS
FOR THE BLIND



Malcolm H. Merrill, M.D., Director
State Department of Public Health



Roy E. Simpson, Director
State Department of Education



John M. Wedemeyer, Director
State Department of Social Welfare

MEMBERSHIP, ORGANIZATION, AND FUNCTIONS OF THE COUNCIL

During the twelve-month period covered by this report, January 1, 1960 to December 31, 1960, the council members were:

Malcolm H. Merrill, M.D., Director, State Department of Public Health
Roy E. Simpson, Director, State Department of Education
John M. Wedemeyer, Director, State Department of Social Welfare

The council met four times during the year to further the coordination of state programs for the blind. The chairmanship rotated among its members, and as in previous years the Coordinating Committee on State Services for the Blind served as a working committee, reporting to the Council at these quarterly meetings. The committee membership was as follows:

Department of Education

Francis W. Doyle, Deputy Superintendent; Chief, Division of Special Schools and Services
Allen Jenkins, Administrator, Orientation Center for the Blind
Berthold Lowenfeld, Superintendent, California School for the Blind
Andrew Marrin, Chief Vocational Rehabilitation Service
Bernece McCrary, Supervisor, Field Service for the Adult Blind
Dorothy L. Misbach, Consultant in Education of the Blind
S. W. Patterson, Assistant Chief, Division of Special Schools and Services
Anthony E. Septinelli, Supervisor of Services for the Blind
Virginia S. Simpson, Blind Section Librarian
Ernest P. Willenberg, Chief, Bureau of Special Education

Department of Public Health

William D. Simmons, Supervisor, Prevention of Blindness Program

Department of Social Welfare

Lillian McClure, Assistant Chief, Division for the Blind
Perry Sundquist, Chief, Division for the Blind

MAJOR ITEMS CONSIDERED BY COORDINATING COUNCIL

Among the issues to come before the council during the report year there were two of more than usual importance. The council takes this opportunity to direct the attention of the Legislature to these items:

1. In August, 1959, the Division of Special Schools and Services was informed by the Department of Public Works, Division of Highways, that a major portion of the facilities of the Oakland Center, California Industries for the Blind, and Oakland Orientation Center for the Blind would be required for highway purposes on or about September 1, 1962. The Ways and Means Committee of the Assembly and the Senate Finance Committee were informed of this fact during 1960 budget hearings. Subsequent meetings throughout this past year have been held with personnel of the Department of Public Works, Department of Finance, Legislative Analyst, and the Department of Education to keep all informed as to the proposed project.

Destruction of the facilities of these two agencies will make it necessary to rebuild the California Industries for the Blind on that portion of land not to be acquired for highway purposes. Because of the high noise factor it is deemed necessary to construct the residential facility for the Orientation Center on a new site.

After more than a year of discussion by all concerned, the Division of Highways now proposes to pay somewhat more than \$1,000,000 to the state for the property. The Division of Architecture estimates the cost of one new site and construction of two new facilities to be about \$2,500,000. The Department of Education, therefore, submitted in its capital outlay budget to the Department of Finance an amount felt necessary to construct these facilities. The request was not approved by the Department of Finance. Without housing, these two facilities cannot operate.

The Department of Finance based its deletion of the Department's request on two grounds: (a) It questions the right of the Division of Highways to acquire the property; (b) It feels that the Division of Highways should pay a price sufficient to defray the costs of reconstruction. The Directors of Finance, Public Works, and Education have conferred on the matter but to date no solution has been found. It seems appropriate, therefore, to advise the Legislature that unless this issue can be resolved during the current legislative session the Department of Education will be forced to give up land and buildings in the fall of 1962. Without funds for reconstruction, programs established by the Legislature to help reduce adult blind dependency are jeopardized.

2. During the year the Coordinating Committee undertook a study of apprenticeship laws to determine if changes should be recommended to the Legislature by the Coordinating Council in order to encourage the training of blind persons under the apprenticeship program. A pilot study embracing eligible young blind individuals in the five Bay Area counties was conducted. The findings of the study have been discussed with staff members of the Division of Apprenticeship Standards. It has now been determined that fuller investigation is needed of the potential under existing law for providing training for selected blind persons. This is currently under way and preliminary findings do not yet indicate whether changes will be required.

REVIEW OF DEPARTMENTAL PROGRAMS

I. Education Programs for the Visually Handicapped

In September, 1960 the Director of Education transferred the supervision of the Bureau of Special Education from the Division of Instruction to the Division of Special Schools and Services. This was done in order to achieve greater coordination of programs for physically handicapped children in the public schools with the state residential school programs. It is anticipated that this consolidation will result in improved programs in both the residential school and public school programs.

The Division of Special Schools and Services provides administrative and educational supervision for the California School for the Blind, Berkeley; the California School for the Deaf, Berkeley; California School for the Deaf, Riverside; School for Cerebral Palsied Children, Southern California; School for Cerebral Palsied Children, Northern California; Oakland Orientation Center for the Blind; centers of the California Industries for the Blind located in Berkeley, Los Angeles, and the Opportunity Work Centers for the Blind located in Berkeley, Los Angeles, and San Jose; the Vocational Rehabilitation Service; the Bureau of Special Education; and the Field Rehabilitation Services for the Blind. Reports on the activities of agencies conducting programs for the blind follow:

A. Field Service for Blind Preschool Children and Their Parents in Southern California

On December 31, 1960, 83 children were served by two visiting teachers from the Field Service for Preschool Blind Children of the California School for the Blind. One of the teachers was located in Los Angeles serving a part of Los Angeles and the area south, and the other teacher was located in Santa Barbara serving a part of Los Angeles and the area north, including Bakersfield. Of the 83 children, 23 (28 per cent) were blind as a result of retrolental fibroplasia; this is a reduction from last year when out of 81 children, 31, or 38 per cent were blind from retrolental fibroplasia. These low percentages contrast markedly with the peak years of retrolental fibroplasia (1950-53) when up to 257 children were served of whom 186 or almost three-quarters were blind as a result of retrolental fibroplasia.

B. California School for the Blind

The California School for the Blind provides education for blind, partially blind, and deaf-blind children from kindergarten through high school. It functions under the Division of Special Schools and Services of the State Department of Education as a part of the public school system of the State. The school aims to assist blind children in gaining a knowledge of the realities around them, to instill in them the confidence to cope with these realities, and to give them the feeling that they are recognized as individuals in their own right. It is the school's policy to have all senior high school students (10th through 12th grades) attend public high schools in Berkeley or Oakland, while they receive reader's service, guidance, tutoring, and room and board at the California School for the Blind. This arrangement is designed so that students can gradually adjust to working, associating, and competing with their seeing peers. At the end of the 1959-60 school year 23 students left the school. Of these, 4 graduated, 14 went to public school programs in their home communities, 3 finished their education, and 2 moved out of state. New admissions brought student enrollment in the current school year to 162.

As foreseen, this was the first year in which enrollment in kindergarten was smaller than in previous years. From 1954 on the number

of children blind as a result of retrolental fibroplasia decreased drastically as medical research and professional education made control of this disease possible.

C. Visually Handicapped Students in Public Schools

The Bureau of Special Education for the first time requested the registration of both blind and partially seeing students enrolled in public schools in California. Of the 1,786 registered visually handicapped students 1,461 were enrolled in 148 organized programs in public schools with 145 special teachers; 325 not in any form of organized program were served by the bureau's two Educational Counselors for the Blind. The American Printing House for the Blind accepted for registration 1,154 of these students as legally blind pointing up a need for further evaluation of the educational definition of blindness and additional emphasis on vision screening methods to aid in locating partially seeing students. The basic series of state-adopted textbooks is being produced in Braille for grades one through eight and in large print for grades three through eight. With the aid of large print books many legally blind children are being educated as partially seeing students. Volunteer, and, in some instances, paid transcribers are producing many of the materials needed by visually handicapped students, especially those at the secondary level. It takes considerable effort to coordinate the services of approximately thirty groups of transcribers in the state. There is urgent need for a central "clearing house" and depository for books produced in Braille, large print, and recorded form. It would seem this should be considered a state responsibility.

While the exact figure is not known it is estimated that there are approximately 500 or more blind children institutionalized in California state hospitals or living at home because facilities adequate to their multiple needs have not been provided. It would seem mandatory that these needs be evaluated.

Increasingly educators believe they have a responsibility for teaching orientation and mobility skills to young blind children. This will require a special course for teachers in the general area of orientation and a center for training mobility instructors in the more technical areas. Such training is essential as visually handicapped youth approach the age for considering employment.

D. Readers' Service for Blind College Students:

During the fiscal year 1959-60, 59 blind students used the Readers' Service for College Students at a total cost of a little over \$22,000. Of these students, 19 were graduate students and the others pursued undergraduate studies. The average amount used per student for the fiscal year was \$375.

E. Field Rehabilitation Services for the Blind

The Field Rehabilitation Services for the Blind assists visually handicapped adults adjust to the social, psychological and physical conditions

resulting from this handicap. This is done by individual instruction and counseling in the home where it is possible to observe and evaluate both advantages and problems which influence the individual.

The program for each blind pupil is developed from the services of special agencies for the blind and local community resources. Great care is taken to enable the pupil to make decisions in his own behalf with the aim of developing and maintaining skill and confidence so that the individual may continue in his normal circle of life with the fullness of his own ability. The program is often pre-vocational.

Twenty-four Home Teacher-Counselors, working in designated areas throughout the state give instruction in those skills necessary for daily living: Braille (reading and writing), typing, mobility (cane travel), household arts, personal grooming, etc.

During the past year the field staff maintained a caseload of approximately 1,000 active pupils; made 1,080 new contacts; held over 7,000 counseling sessions; gave over 12,000 lessons in Braille, typing, household arts, travel training, etc. They made 31 referrals to the Orientation Center for the Blind in Oakland; 55 referrals to local county welfare programs; 20 to Vocational Rehabilitation Services for the Blind; 359 to the State Library; and 254 miscellaneous referrals to community services, such as health clinics and legal aid.

F. Orientation Center for the Blind

The Orientation Center provides training and guidance for active and productive lives for blind individuals from all segments of society. During this year 60 students were enrolled. Of the 57 students whose orientation program was terminated, 20 are taking further training at the school, 2 are self-employed, 12 are employed by others, 4 are housewives, 17 are unemployed, and 2 are deceased.

G. California State Library - Books for the Blind

During the calendar year 1960 there was an increase of 13 per cent in the circulation of Braille, Moon type and Talking Book records. A total of 14,422 volumes in Braille and Moon type and a total of 104,593 containers of Talking Book records were circulated making a grand total of 119,015 volumes and containers. The circulation of embossed type books rose by a startling 16 per cent this year following the upward trend which was evidenced during the calendar year 1959. This large increase is the result of more active borrowing by blind children and the increasing use made of juvenile Braille titles by teachers of blind children in public schools. The Talking Book circulation increase was 12 per cent, the same as last year.

At the end of the year there were 3,584 active borrowers, an increase of 312 over last year.

The waiting list for talking book machines was finally eliminated this year, making it possible to furnish machines to all blind persons desiring them as soon as the application has been completed.

H. California Industries for the Blind

The three production centers for the blind reported total sales for the calendar year 1960 of \$1,981,000. This is a major drop from the preceding year due primarily to a reduction in sales to the Federal Government and in the commercial house-to-house type of distribution.

Wages paid to the blind and handicapped totaled \$421,373. This is likewise a reduction from prior years, due, of course, to the reduced sales volume. The Department has continued to improve the wage rates for the workers whenever possible and has made retroactive wage adjustments when funds were available from current operations.

The Coordinating Council on State Programs for the Blind in its 1958 report to the Legislature suggested operations in the centers be limited to: (1) production of goods which can be sold to federal, state, county, and city political subdivisions and districts; (2) production of carefully selected items that can be sold competitively with private industry; and (3) subcontract or assembly operations. The policy of the Department of Education has been to limit operations as far as possible to the three fields during the year. The 1959 General Session of the Legislature recommended to the political subdivisions and districts of the state, city, and county governments that they purchase products of the production centers whenever it is feasible for them to do so. This has apparently assisted in the increase of sales to state agencies but has had no marked effect on city and county governments. During the past calendar year the Personnel Board established positions recommended for the marketing program, and approved lists of eligible employees are now available. A Marketing Engineer has been appointed and a Sales Engineer in Southern California will be available not later than March, 1961, with a view of placing increased emphasis on subcontract or assembly operations. Work is under way in the Los Angeles Center to recruit personnel and secure the necessary equipment for that program.

I. Vocational Rehabilitation Service

The Vocational Rehabilitation Service completed a successful year with a total of 120 blind persons successfully rehabilitated. In the meantime, the active case load of blind persons has continued to increase with a total of 618 persons for 409 of whom a rehabilitation plan has been developed. Many of the rehabilitation plans involve full college training so that the turnover in this type of case is not rapid. At the close of the 1959-60 fiscal year a new high was reached in Vending Stand Program with 207 active vending stands, snackbars, and cafeterias. These installations showed a gross sale of \$4,628,378 resulting in average annual earnings of \$5,208, or \$434 per month per person. The 207 blind operators employed 352 helpers during the year of whom 62 were blind and 48 were persons with other disabilities. The total wages paid for the year were \$589,893.

II. Social Welfare Programs for the Blind

A. California's three social welfare programs for the blind may be briefly summarized as follows:

1. Aid to Needy Blind

This program provides financial assistance and other services to needy blind persons. In December, 1960, 13,272 persons received an average grant of \$100.65 and an average medical care payment of \$5.01. Most of these persons have been self-supporting sighted men and women and blindness has occurred at an age when retirement had already begun.

During the year the 86th Congress enacted amendments to the Social Security Act, two of which will affect the Aid to Needy Blind program in California. First, the amount of exempt earned income permitted was above \$85 a month. The increased amount of the exemption, with the sliding-scale principle, will encourage more recipients to develop and pursue plans for self-support which may lead to economic independence. Second, the 50-year age limitation upon eligibility for disability cash benefits was eliminated. Many persons who lost their sight while employed in covered industry will benefit.

2. Aid to Potentially Self-Supporting Blind Residents

This program provides financial assistance, with liberal property and income exemptions, as incentives to blind persons who have a plan to achieve self-support so they may become independent of public assistance. In December, 1960, 330 persons received an average grant of \$114.61 and an average medical care payment of \$2.50.

During the year more than one-third (34 per cent) of all discontinuances under this program was due to earnings. Some of these blind men and women will have their aid restored, while others have achieved full and permanent self-support.

3. Prevention of Blindness

This program provides medical eye care for applicants and recipients of Aid to the Blind when such care might restore vision or prevent further loss of sight. The program is primarily a surgical one, covers all of the expenses incident to such care and includes the surgeon's fee and hospitalization. During the year it is estimated that 283 eye surgeries were performed of which 261 were cataract surgeries. It is estimated that about 95 per cent of these surgeries resulted in improved vision; and in about 87 per cent of the cases vision was so greatly improved that the patients were no longer eligible for Aid to the Blind.

B. Caseload Trends

California's general population has been increasing at a very substantial rate for the past fifteen years. The caseload in Aid to the Blind has expanded at a rate more rapid than the general population for the first six years of this period, but thereafter increased at a rate proportionate to the general population increase until May, 1959, when the peak caseload of 13,805 was reached. During the twelve months of the past

calendar year there has been a steady, if small, monthly decline so that the caseload in December, 1960 was 441 less than that in December, 1959. The caseload in Aid to Potentially Self-Supporting Blind Residents increased by only 35 cases during the calendar year.

There are several factors which account for the complete reversal in the caseload trend. An increasingly large number of persons are receiving retirement benefits under the Social Security Act; and an increasing number are receiving disability benefits when blindness occurs during employment in covered industry. Also, the restoration of eyesight through surgery reduces the number of actual and potential recipients. If the Aid to Needy Blind caseload continues to drop, as seems indicated by the trend which has persisted during the past year, we can look forward to a marked decrease in the rate of dependency in the months and years immediately ahead.

C. Needs of the Social Welfare Programs for the Blind

1. Unmet needs of recipients. At present if a recipient of Aid to Needy Blind has special needs but no outside income with which to pay for such needs, he must continue with unmet need. Only about one-half of the recipients have any income at all with which to even partially meet the costs of special needs such as those for housing and utilities, nursing home care, laundry service, telephone service, and food. This unmet need for such a large portion of the caseload constitutes the most serious inadequacy in the Aid to Needy Blind program.
2. Smaller caseloads. If the county social workers are to have sufficient time to effectively carry out the legislative mandate of assisting applicants and recipients of Aid to the Blind to decrease dependency, some means must be found to appreciably lower the number of clients for whom any one social worker has responsibility.
3. Greater economic opportunities for the blind. There is continued and urgent need for an accelerated effort, on many fronts, to stimulate the creation of more economic opportunities for blind persons so that a larger number of recipients can achieve self-support and thus gain independence of public assistance.
4. Increase in Prevention of Blindness appropriation. There is need for an increase in the appropriation for the Prevention of Blindness program to meet the anticipated increased caseload and to raise the surgical fees up to the level of those now being paid by other state agencies.

III. Prevention of Blindness Program

- A. The State Department of Public Health, through action in the last general session of the Legislature, now maintains a statewide program for prevention of blindness which includes the following features:
 1. Assistance to local health departments and consultation with other local agencies directed toward mass education for prevention of blind-

ness, early identification of conditions leading to blindness, and the application of methods for reducing blindness resulting from preventable conditions.

2. Practical investigations in the cause of blindness in order to develop control procedures.
3. Studies to determine the number, distribution, and nature of conditions leading to blindness in the population of the state.

B. The State Department of Public Health has emphasized in the Prevention of Blindness Program during the past year three aspects of its developing activity in this field:

1. Recognizing the important role of the official state health agency in this field the Department has accepted increasing responsibility for establishing standards for vision screening programs. For example, working with professional and technical advisors, the Department will shortly undertake review and revision of the state manual on recommended procedures for school vision screening. This is being done at the request of the State Department of Education.
2. Community application of known methods for reducing blindness from preventable conditions rests on public and professional awareness. To increase this as a basis for action, use has been made of program aids, exhibits, and informational material designed to commit local health departments to planned follow-up steps the aim of which is wider community knowledge about preventable blindness.
3. Early detection and referral for adequate treatment is the key to prevention of blindness from two important conditions--amblyopia in preschool children and glaucoma in the aging segment of the population. The availability of screening programs for these conditions is an important community resource and is promoted through continuing consultation and support of demonstrations in local health departments. Good examples of such endeavors are the Glaucoma Detection Center in the San Jose City Health Department jointly sponsored by the Santa Clara County Medical Society and supported by active community groups. About 100 individuals a week pass through this center for screening and referral to medical attention if indicated. In San Bernardino the county health department has designed and produced a device, now to be demonstrated, which is expected to permit screening for amblyopia in children younger than is possible with present methods.

A LOOK BACK ----

Two unique events in the history of California programs for the blind, and, so far as is known, unique as achievements, took place this year: A long-term program of rehabilitation of a young deaf-blind woman whose achievements in many ways equal that of Helen Keller was brought to a successful conclusion. The success of the program was due to the cooperation of

almost all of the official state agencies for the blind and certain voluntary agencies. These include the California School for the Blind, Field Rehabilitation Services for the Blind, American Foundation for the Blind, Guide Dogs for the Blind, Inc., public welfare agencies, and voluntary reader and Braille transcriber organization and finally by the efforts of the Vocational Rehabilitation Service. The deaf-blind person is now employed full-time by the State of California as a Home-Teacher Counselor, having secured her position through open competitive examination.

Three pupils of the California School for the Blind were presented the nationally coveted Eagle Scout Badge after they passed all official pre-requisites for this honor. Among the three students was a boy who is both deaf and blind and is the first deaf-blind boy ever to receive the Eagle Scout Award. The Berkeley Lions Club, which has sponsored Troop 2 of the California School for the Blind for 33 years, held the Court of Honor.

----AND A LOOK AHEAD

In the coming year the Coordinating Council on State Programs for the Blind through its working committee will complete the study of apprenticeship opportunities for selected blind candidates. Other problems which present themselves for attention include:

1. Study of the need for creation and maintenance of a central clearing house and depository for books produced in Braille, large print, and recorded form. Development of such a center would coordinate the largely volunteer services of 30 transcriber groups in the state producing materials for visually handicapped public school students.
2. Investigation of the educational needs of 500 or more blind children who have additional handicaps for whom appropriate services are not now available to help them achieve maximum independence and thus reduce the costs of institutional care.
3. Study of the need for training courses in orientation and mobility for teachers of blind children.